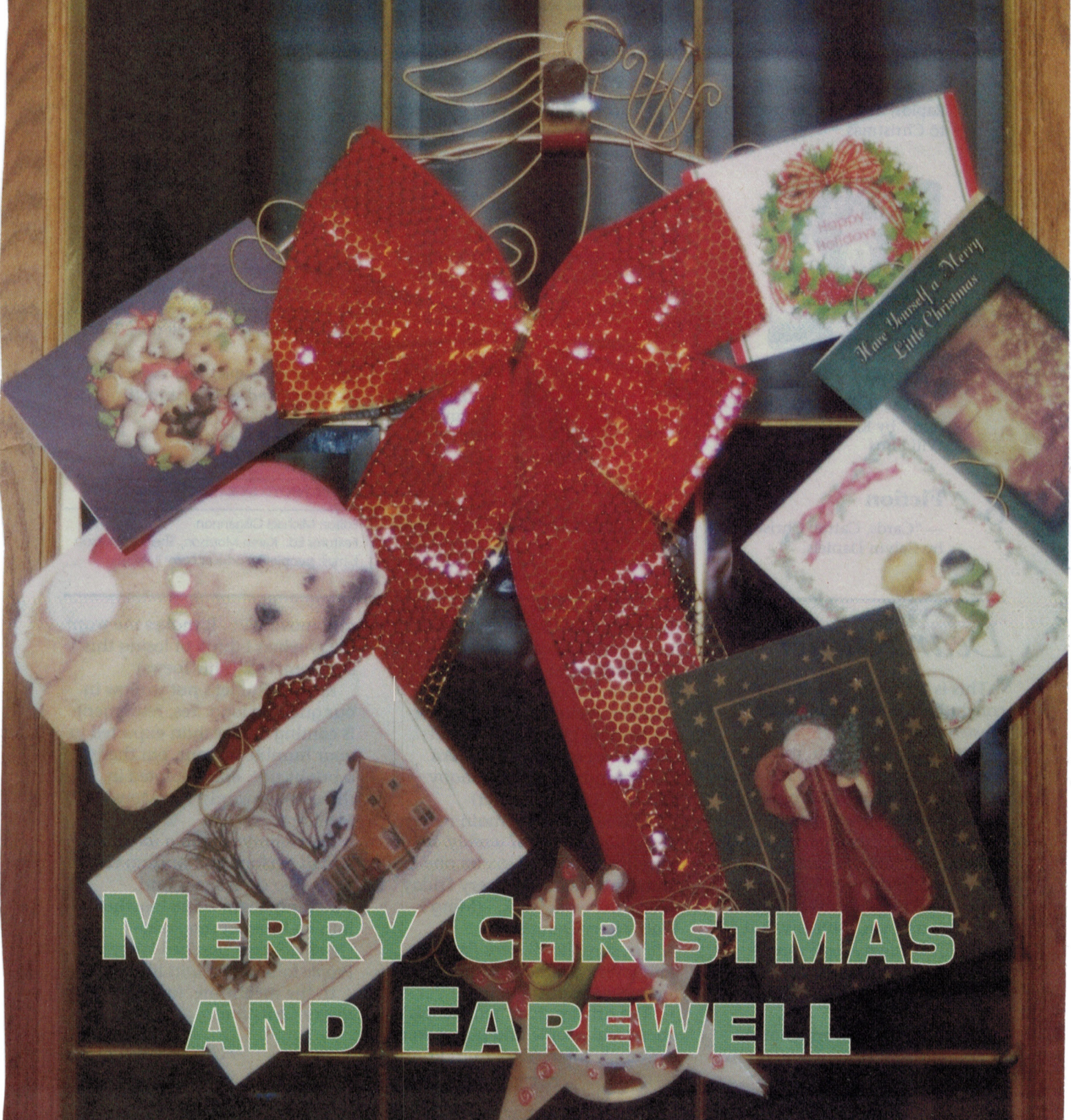


WESTERN PEOPLE

Supplement to The Western Producer Dec. 21, 2000



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND FAREWELL

WESTERN PEOPLE

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A Christmas Dream

From the windows, candle glow
Caresses drifts of mounded snow,
While snug within, the children wait —
They rub their eyes — it's getting late!
When will they hear each little hoof
Tap, tap, tapping on the roof?

And while the children watch and wait,
We also wait and dream and hope.
We pray the dove will spread her wings
and shower peace while angels sing —
That love will spread its healing hand
And touch the heart of every land.

We offer prayers for every child
Across the vistas far and wide —
Let each be safe — like yours, like mine,
Held and cherished for all time.

And may each child hear every hoof
Of magic reindeer on the roof!

— Adelaide Schartner

COVER PHOTO BY KAREN MORRISON.

Editor: Michael Gillgannon
Features Ed.: Karen Morrison, Sheila Robertson
E-mail: people@producer.com

Dear Reader

This is the final, last, ultimate, concluding, endmost issue of *Western People*.

When words fail you, my father used to say, quote somebody else.

"For quite a few years now there have been numerous quality sources for agricultural news and information. What I have not had was any other source of the history, nostalgia, varied life philosophies and yes, whimsy, that I found in *Western People* magazine." (Al McDougall)

"*Western People* was a true gem." (Bill Bolstad)

"I don't give a damn what the economic implications are. It's like

the passing of the *Family Herald*, a further erosion of Canada." (Robert George)

"Every week as I unfolded the *Producer*, *Western People* became my reading priority . . . It had become an archive of western history and tradition in many homes." (Ewald Gossner)

"This is one of the main reasons we subscribe to your weekly. It contains such good stories and I anticipate its arrival every Friday to end the work week." (Marg Wahl / Jerry Dennis)

"I'm sure the *Western Producer* will never be quite the same again." (Anne Smailes)

"The articles from 'real people' about real people and places were extremely interesting, humorous

and moving . . . It makes me want to cry when I think of losing this supplement." (Rita Toews)

Me too. But let's not wallow in our grief too long. Yes, retirement is coming earlier than expected to your humble servant, but there is a bright side, encapsulated in three lovely words: No. More. Meetings.

And what's to stop a so-called retired person from hurling electrons into cyberspace and watching them come together into an internet magazine ("e-zine") that parched *Western People* followers might like?

In the meantime, farewell, and merry Christmas.

Michael Gillgannon

A wondrous gift

Memory by Sheryl (Mandin) Salloum

Every year as Christmas draws near, I find myself drawn to recollections of my mother. Bibian (Joubert) Mandin did not have financial wealth, but she was rich in spirit. In spite of a Yuletide tragedy that I will describe below, and despite the fact that money was always in short supply, she managed to make Christmas a joyous family occasion.

My mother's life was not always happy. She endured a marriage made difficult by her husband John's alcoholism, raised seven rambunctious children in the days before disposable diapers and medical coverage. She was as adept with mustard plasters and poultices as she was at making bread.

She nearly died from rheumatic fever and never had enough money to meet her family's needs. Through all these tribulations, her exuberance for life never waned. My most enduring memory is of her boisterous laughter.

Mother was born in Alberta in 1916. Upon completing the ninth grade, she had to quit school and seek employment. She was hired by a farming family in Northern Saskatchewan.

Helping with the cooking, cleaning and mending for eight young men was hard work but she delighted in the self-sufficiency of the homestead. She also learned practical skills such as spinning, knitting and quilting.

Our home was always made cozy by Mother's rag rugs, home-made wool quilts, and the socks, mittens, and scarves that she expertly knitted without the use of patterns. Our larder was filled with her preserves, and the scent of freshly baked breads always greeted us as we returned home, famished, from school.

In spite of her shyness, Mother found herself engaged to one of the farm's young men. Among her favorite stories was that of a stormy winter day when she and the man who was to become my father were sent off to a neighboring farmhouse to purchase a spinning wheel.

A snowstorm had already started but her future mother-in-law was eager to have the wheel in order to spin the wool needed for knitting winter wear for the family. My mother blushed when she admitted that my grandmother also presumed that the inclement weather would prevent the young lovers from "getting into mischief." Mother blushed more deeply when she conceded that my grandmother was correct.

My parents married during the Depression and, in order to survive, they worked a farm with my father's brother and

sister-in-law. One Christmas Eve, my parents decided to travel to the nearby town to buy a few gifts for their two small sons.

A prairie snowstorm was worsened by the windchill, which had dropped the temperatures to below minus 40°. Mother did not like the idea of leaving the children but finally decided that they would be safer in the warmth of their house and the care of her in-laws.



Bibian (Joubert) Mandin, 1930s.

While my parents were away, my aunt and uncle put the children to bed and then went to the barn to do the evening's chores. A burning kerosene lamp was left on a table in the children's room. Mother never left a lamp in their room and the youngsters were curious.

In reaching for the light, they knocked the lamp onto the bed, starting a fire. The two-year-old fled from the flames and smoke. Returning to check on the boys, my aunt and uncle found the eldest crying on the stairs. They managed to rescue the baby from the burning bed and douse the fire.

My parents returned, delighted with the few Christmas gifts they had been able to purchase with their meagre finances. Their joy turned to grief when they were greeted by their frantic relatives, a traumatized toddler, and a baby that was badly burned below the waist. They made a nightmarish trip back to the distant town and hospital. The baby died a few hours later.

Amazingly, Mother never blamed her relatives for the loss of her child. She knew that they would endure that pain forever. Nor did she retain negative associations with Christmas. Though each December she must have vividly relived the loss of her infant, Mother always made sure that our celebrations were festive. She understood that during a lifetime people have to contend with and overcome incredible adversities, but a smile does truly heal.

Mother has now passed away but each year, at Christmas time, I unwrap the holiday keepsakes that I have inherited from her. With each memento, I rejoice that she has given me a wondrous gift. By her example, my mother taught me that we should grieve life's tragedies but we should also seek out occasions for celebration and gaiety.

Now, in memory of my mother, I exult in those special moments that are shared with family and friends. During such times, her laughter mingles with mine. ■■

(Sheryl Mandin Salloum is a Vancouver freelance writer. Her parents left Prince Albert, Sask. for British Columbia in 1944 and retired in Surrey.)

'I love Christmas'



Maria Johnson

By Maria Johnson

Twinkling outdoor lights, a wooden bridge and cheery Christmas lawn ornaments are just a brief introduction to the treasures within Lorraine and Stan Woitt's home. The spirit of Christmas flourishes at their Rocky Rapids, Alta., residence, the fourth house east of the only stop signs in town.

Every room in this tidy, modest home is a visual feast; each has its own theme, colors and Christmas tree. They incorporate pieces from Lorraine's collection of miniature houses.

The decorating and open house began 14 years ago. "I started with a pink flocked tree in the living room and it's just grown from that," said Lorraine.

She said her husband is no longer surprised when she comes home with decorations. "I see so many pretty things that I want so I use them to decorate."

And Stan is always willing to help,

climbing a ladder, setting up another tree or hanging Christmas lights.

A sparkling white town winterscape, complete with electric train, sits near the door. Garlands and bows wrap the backs of chairs and the spicy smells of Christmas baking fill the brightly lit kitchen.



Maria Johnson

Top: The entry to the Woitt house. Above: Christmas house miniature.

Inside a Victorian-accented living room, cherubs grace a ribbon and poinsettia trimmed banister and delicate hand-crocheted ornaments adorn the tree.

Rich purple packages, ribbons and candles color the main floor laundry down the hall. Royal blue Christmas bulbs, baubles and tinsel shine in one bedroom while another holds Lorraine's collection of ornate angels.

The Woitt basement features a large collection of miniatures. Her favorite is a 55-inch wide, three-foot high, 12-room house, completely furnished, decorated and landscaped. It took her 2 1/2 years to complete.

Tiny working electric lamps and chandeliers light the rooms; little pictures hang on the papered walls; miniature dishes fill the china cabinets and books line the shelves.

"Sometimes I would work 12 to 16 hours a day but the hours just flew by," she said.

She is finishing off a few rooms, but

has decided not to begin any new ones.

Lorraine started in miniatures with kits but soon began to construct some of the furniture for the tiny rooms herself. The rest was purchased.

"I couldn't even imagine what it would be worth if I were asked to put a price on it," said Lorraine.

Her reward is the pleasure of those who tour her home each December and marvel at the displays. "I love Christmas," she said.

Lorraine is well known for that love and for her attention to detail.

Longtime friend Faythe Wood once worked with Lorraine in a flower shop, where she learned of her hobbies.

"Lorraine truly loves Christmas and she loves to give," said Wood, manager of a flower and gift shop in nearby Drayton Valley. "She's very talented and she's known for her special little gifts to friends."

Lorraine has been asked to decorate other people's homes for Christmas. "She has a very good eye for color and a lot of people ask her opinion," said Wood.

Don Trupp of DT Design said she gives the same attention to her miniatures as decorators give to a whole room. "It's amazing," he said, "She presents this little jewel in a case."

Friend Mariam McLeod describes the Woitt collection as "awesome" and is thrilled to have her own Woitt room on display, a tiny glass encased kitchen that has sparked many conversations.

"Lorraine is a perfectionist but she's very modest," said McLeod, adding Stan is proud of her accomplishments and seems to enjoys it as much as Lorraine.

Prominently on display in Lorraine's kitchen is one of her most recent acquisitions, a ceramic Santa sleigh and reindeer she could not resist. "I always say I'm not going to do more but it's addictive," she said. ■■

Winter On Vancouver Island

In Canada I live the seasons round;
No southerly migration calls to me
In winter. Here I stay, and I have found
A subtle beauty in the winter sea.

On clear days from my bedroom I can see
Mount Arrowsmith serenely clad in white.
Viewed through a latticework of leafless tree
On sunny mornings, it's a stirring sight.

Canadian snowbirds in their southward flight
Avoid the rain, the snow, the bitter chill;
But do they miss as well the keen delight
Of frosty moonlit nights so calm and still?

The bliss of winter sunlight on bare trees?
The warmth of home, the blessing of heart's ease?

— Hereward Allix

Where Most Poems Go

I sat down one winter evenin'
When I was all alone,
Feelin' sorely bored as heck,
So I penned myself a poem.

I wrote about the weather —
The temperature an' wind,
Told of life upon the plains,
An' my farmin' next of kin.

Of how I wished I'd been there,
An' surmised it was a pity,
Portrayed what I had witnessed,
An' related somethin' witty.

I kept tryin' to make a point —
The darn thing rambled on
For what seemed eternity,
Until I realized it was dawn.

So I crumpled up the paper,
To start the mornin' fire,
Take the chill out of my bones for
Another day of checkin' wire.

Up the chimney went the smoke,
As the eastern winds did blow
The words, out t'wards the Rockies —
Left them scattered high an' low.

So if one day out ridin'
You feel thoughts meltin' with the snow,
There's no reason for alarm;
Cause that's where most poems go.

— Steve Foote



Fiction by Rick Cogbill and Will Enns

The Innkeeper's Christmas

"**B**uck Pincher, will you stop poking the presents?" my wife Dolly scolded. "You can't find out what you're getting till tomorrow morning. Why don't you pour us some eggnog to sip while we watch the Grinch steal Christmas!"

As I lingered, she added, "One more sleep and you'll see what St. Nick has for you. And you have to promise that you won't get up before dawn and wake the whole family again."

I don't know why, but sometimes Dolly treats me like a small child.

Later, as I drifted into the land of the sandman, I thought it would be nice if on this Christmas Eve, there would not be a midnight check-in to spoil my beauty rest.

Suddenly, a shrill screech set my nerve endings vibrating like tuning forks. As I climbed down from the ceiling, I realized it was just the office bell. Some poor soul needed a bed for the remainder of the night.

I looked out and what to my wondering eyes should appear but a dirt road in front of our motel. What happened to the four-lane highway, I thought. And what's this young couple with a donkey doing on my doorstep?

"Sorry," said the young man when I opened the door, "but with the shepherd's conference taking up every room in Bethlehem, there's nowhere else to go." Bethlehem? I thought this was Slumberland...

After dealing with the customers I returned to bed and Dolly sleepily asked who was out there.

"A pair of crazy kids," I complained. "Out in this weather, and on a donkey of all things.

"Don't they know it's the night before Christmas?" asked Dolly.

"I dunno. Told them there was no room in the inn, but they said they would take anything with a roof."

"So what did you do?" asked Dolly suspiciously, becoming more alert.

"Why, I charged them five shekels of tin and put them in the pool shed, er... I mean the stable. Yeah, I put them in the stable. Hated to do that, her being pregnant and all."

"You put a pregnant woman in the stable?" screeched Dolly. "Have you no shame?"

"Sure I do, but the five shekels in my pocket will buy some salve for my conscience. Besides, what's the chance she'll come due tonight?"

"You better use those shekels to buy yourself a thick blanket, because you're sleeping in the doghouse tonight," snapped Dolly as she headed for the laundry.

"Hah! The doghouse is full! Charged those three wise guys two shekels apiece for it," I chortled. "Dinged 'em extra for their Camillacs, too. They said something about following 'The Star.' Hey, is there a show in town that we don't know about?"

The scene felt like a bad dream, so I stuck my head out the window for some fresh air.

"Oh-oh, here come some more shep-

herds. I bet I can get a couple more shekels if I put them in the crawl space. Hey, those guys are all heading for the stable. I'm gonna go out there and charge 'em extra if they think they can cohabitate just because it's a stable."

Dolly had no ear for my troubles. She just bustled past me with blankets, pillows, hot water and towels.

"I hope you're charging 'em extra for all that stuff," I hollered. "I told them housekeeping was not included."

A customer pounded on the office door. "Hey you, Innkeeper. You didn't tell me you were running a Broadway musical tonight. Turn off the spotlight and let a tired Roman sleep, will ya?"

I looked out. The stable was lit from above like a stage.

The phone rang. It was Slim Shambles the wheelwright. "I'm real happy you got the whole Tabernacle Choir staying there, but do they have to practise at three in the morning? Tell 'em to clamp a lid on it. I can hear 'em all the way to my smithy."

No sooner had Slim slammed the phone down than Hokey Mike of the Kosher Dog and Burger called. "Hey, what's with the Calgary Stampede, already? There's sheep and camels schmoozing all over the place, an' Rachel's gonna make the Rabbi reinstate Temple sacrifices if those shepherds don't get their flocks outta her flowerbeds. Now give those guys a tune-up or I'll call the Romans down on you!"

When Dolly came back in, she was bubbling over with excitement. "That poor sweet couple; I got to help deliver their baby," she babbled. "Then I gave them back their money as a baby present."

"You did what!" I shouted. "That pair has been nothing but trouble since they arrived. Simon the Soothsayer already demanded a refund — said he didn't like the vibes around here. And he was one of our best customers."

"Now calm down, Buck," Dolly soothed. "Those kids can't help it if everyone in town wants to gawk at their new baby. You know, there's something special about that child, but I can't put my finger on it. Now take a

pill and come back to bed."

As I drifted off to sleep five shekels poorer, I thought I heard a choir of angels. I couldn't be sure though, as the only angel I know is Dolly, and her singing doesn't sound like that when she takes a shower after I've used up the hot water.

The next morning when I awoke, the snow was melting off the pavement. Hey, what happened to the dirt road? I got dressed and went out to check the stable, er... pool shed? That's funny, I mused, there were sheep and camels all

*"YOU KNOW, THERE'S
SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT
THAT CHILD, BUT I CAN'T PUT
MY FINGER ON IT. NOW TAKE A
PILL AND COME BACK TO BED."*

over here last night. I searched the snow outside the shed, but found no signs of sheep tracks or even footprints.

"That was some dream," I muttered as I went into the house. Dolly looked up from the stove.

"What was a dream, dear?" she asked as she seared the bacon into submission.

"Don't you remember the young couple with the baby and the donkey..." I stopped, because Dolly was giving me the owly eye.

I turned towards the Christmas tree and changed the subject.

"Well, it must be time for presents. Can't wait to see if I got that freon-cooled turbo-charged Bios chip for my computer! Ah, I'm glad they invented Christmas, with all its commercialism. It's the only day of the year where you can be greedy without feeling guilty." Yet in spite of myself, I knew that something was missing.

Dolly put her arms around me and looked at the plastic Christmas tree, nearly buried beneath a mountain of brightly-wrapped packages. "Is that really why we have Christmas? Isn't there more to it than just presents?"

"Maybe," I shrugged. But a glance at the tiny manger scene on the mantle left me with a powerful sense of déjà vu. There were sure a lot of people around that manger last night. I wonder, why did they all come? ■



Fiction by Calvin Daniels

The card was still there. It was sitting behind the counter glass just as it had been every Saturday for the past month.

"Christmas is coming," said Brady, the tall man behind the counter, looking at the young boy, head bent, staring through the glass.

"I know," said Devon, not bothering to look up. He had been in the shop so often he had a mental image of its owner securely in his mind.

Early 40s, tall, glasses, a ready smile, sandy hair starting to show signs of grey and a day's growth of beard. Most of the time he wore a sweater, which, if you looked real close, had hints of sawdust from his other job as a cabinet maker.

"I've told Dad about the card," he said, still looking at the small piece of cardboard. It was a Steve Yzerman rookie card from the 1984-85 O-Pee-Chee set. The edges were a bright red just like Yzerman's Detroit Red Wing uniform. The main picture showed Yzerman turning away from the opposition net. A smaller portrait in the

Cards, Cattle, Christmas

lower right corner showed a close-up of the talented centre.

Devon couldn't recall how many times he had pretended he was Yzerman when he and his friends met on the slough out in the cattle pasture for a game of Saturday afternoon hockey — or how often he had dreamed of playing on Yzerman's line — but he knew Yzerman was his hero.

"What about Santa Claus?" he heard Brady's voice pulling him from his daydream. The question was accompanied by a half smirk, half chuckle.

"I'm 12," said the boy, looking up with indignation.

"Well you tell your dad if he wants it, to come on by, a down payment will

hold it till Christmas."

"Thanks," said Devon, as he turned to leave the store.

He walked down the street to the department store. His mom was in the check-out line, her arms piled high with laundry soap, a jumbo pack of toilet paper, four boxes of hamburger helper, and the latest edition of the local newspaper. Devon waited for her turn and then dutifully picked up a bag and followed her.

"Do you think there's a chance you'll buy me the Steve Yzerman rookie?" he asked once they had stepped out on the street.

"You know the answer to that, Devon," she said, with a stern but sad look.

"I know, I was just hoping," he said.

"Well sometimes hoping isn't enough. It didn't help that your dad and I hoped for a good crop this year. All the rain and cold — well, you know the crop was ruined," she said.

With his free hand, Devon pulled the collar of his hockey jacket up around his neck in defence of a brisk December breeze that had started to swirl snow down the street.

"I was hoping for the crop too," he offered. "It's just that, well, Yzerman's my favorite player and Tim has his rookie card. Adam even has a Gretzky rookie and its worth \$650," said Devon, hurrying to get the words out. "I told them last Saturday I was going to get the card for Christmas."

"You shouldn't have done that, Devon," she admonished. "I know you want the card, but you shouldn't have told your friends that."

"What about Adam and Tim?"

"Adam's dad's a doctor and well, we just can't afford too much this year," she said, upon reaching the car. "Maybe next year."

Yzerman was so smooth on the ice. He was like liquid mercury rolling over polished steel. Smooth and fluid, that was it, all right. He also had a special touch around the net, able to feather the pretty pass, or blast it through for a goal.

That night at the supper table, he gave it one more try.

"The Yzerman rookie's still at the card shop, Dad. Brady says a down payment will hold it till Christmas."

"Is it," said his dad, as he raised a fork of hamburger helper from his plate to his mouth, chewing slowly once the mash was deposited there. When he was finished, he took a deep swallow and looked at Devon. "You know we'd love to buy you that card, but we can't."

The man turned to his wife as though seeking forgiveness for having to turn down his son's one Christmas wish.

"You know Andrews at the bank phoned today. Phyllis, if we don't come up with \$10,000 in 10 days, they're coming for the cattle."

"I was banking on the canola crop, but it went sample. It ain't worth half what I budgeted for."

"Maybe I can get more hours at the restaurant?" she offered.

"It won't be enough," he said, turning back to his supper.

"We started that herd with a heifer we bought with the money our friends gave us at our wedding," she said.

"And I traded a load of wheat to old man Perkins for the second one."

Devon wasn't old enough to take part in discussions of finance, but he knew enough that there was the twist-

ing pain of guilt in his stomach for asking for the card.

"You can sell my hockey cards, Dad," said Devon. "Even the Yzermans. The cattle are more important."

His dad tried to muster a weak smile. "Thanks son, but we'll make out somehow."

For the next five days the house was quiet, like the time Grandma Jones had died, thought Devon.

Even on Saturday when Tim and Adam and the other boys came over for the hockey game, Devon couldn't smile. Even pretending to be Yzerman wasn't enough. Each time he looked up from the game he could see the cattle eating hay and nuzzling the snow.

Tom spent the days poring over the books and talking on the telephone.

Devon wasn't sure what was happening exactly, but whatever his dad was trying wasn't working.

"Well that was it, my last hope. I guess the bank gets the cows," he said.

He wasn't really talking to Devon, although he was the only other person in the room. His dad rose from his chair, put on his work boots and coat and left the house via the back door.

Devon walked over to the door and watched his dad walk through the yard to the cattle corral. He just stood there at the fence and stared at the contented cattle. It was two hours before his dad returned to the house, but in that time he never left the fence, held there transfixed by the impending loss.

Later over a cup of steaming coffee, he asked his wife, "Did you send that letter I wrote yesterday? Hope it works."

"So do I," she said.

The next day, Devon's school bus pulled into the yard as the semi-trailer pulled away from the loading chute near the barn.

His mom and dad were standing near the chute. His mom was crying. His dad was just standing there, his face as pallid as the snow that covered the fields.

"I didn't want you to be here for this," said his mom, the words escaping her mouth between sobs. She reached up with her mittened right hand and tried to wipe away the tears.

"It's all right Mom. I'm part of this family too," he said.

"Well maybe that will clear the land and we can get on with our lives," she

said, as they entered the kitchen.

"Maybe, but those cattle were the only things making us money. The land isn't."

"Then why not sell some of the land and keep the cows?" Devon asked.

His dad looked at his son. He then turned his gaze to his wife. A slight smile was on his lips. "Why not indeed," he said.

"Well old man Simpson has been after the Gilmour section for years. He'd probably buy it in a minute," he said, already flipping through the telephone book for his number. "And we could keep the cattle. If I can swing a deal in a hurry I can call the bank and have them cancel the sale at the stockyards," he said, already dialing the phone.

Two days later the semi was back in the yard when the school bus arrived.

This time cattle were disembarking, and Devon's mom and dad had smiles on their tired faces.

"We did it. The banker was pretty understanding," said his dad, looking at his son who had joined him beside the corral. "This won't solve all the problems, but just maybe we can make it."

Two weeks later, Christmas day arrived. Devon hadn't been back to the card shop since everything happened. He would take what he got and that would be it.

"This one is for you," said his dad, handing his son a parcel from under the tree. It was wrapped in paper covered with tiny crimson Santas and reindeer sporting ruby-red noses.

Devon gave it a perfunctory shake and then ripped open the package like a pride of lions feeding on a gazelle. Soon he unearthed a plastic card holder, and inside it was an Yzerman card. It was one of his recent cards, 15 cents at Brady's place, but tears still began to stream down Devon's face.

"Your dad wrote a letter to the Red Wings and told them about things," said his mom, fighting back a tear. "It arrived two days ago."

"Adam and Tim won't believe this," said Devon, as he traced his finger over the words written in black on the card front "Good Luck Devon" and it was signed Steve Yzerman #19. ■

Dorothy's walk

Memory by
Marlene S. Parish

Dorothy Crandle shaded her eyes from the bright sunlight reflecting off the snow. A school bus returning children home from a nearby school slowed down, then turned down the road in front of her. She waved good bye to the man she had hitched a ride with, turned, tucked her hands in her pockets, and started walking. It was just three and a half miles to her Mom's house near Condor, Alta. and in an hour she would be there.

All winter she had been planning to come, but finding someone to watch her two- and three-year-old boys had been difficult and the weather had been cold. Finally at the beginning of March the weather warmed, and a friend volunteered to watch the boys.

Her cowboy boots slid on the snow as she walked down the country road. Dorothy swore, wishing she had worn something with a bit more grip.

Even as she scrambled along, Dorothy enjoyed the walk. It felt good to be out of the city.

The last mile and a half was a trail. Some brush had been cleared in preparation for road construction. On the trail the snow was waist deep and Dorothy shivered when she saw it.

Her feet were cold, so she leaned against a spruce tree, shook one foot out of her boot and warmed it with a hand. She reversed the procedure with the other foot.

Now her hands as well as her feet felt the chill. The cold of the snow bit through her jeans, numbing her legs. Dorothy lit a cigarette and smoked it until it was ashes.

She observed shallower snow in the field. As she waded in, snow dripped into her boots, inside her socks and froze. Even with her physical effort Dorothy had the shivers.

A blue jay scolded her from a tree. Somewhere in the distance a raven called. Dorothy was tempted to have another cigarette, but she went on instead.

The sun dipped below the horizon and the temperature dropped a degree.

Dorothy could no longer feel her feet and her legs felt like sticks. Even if she stopped to wring out her socks, there was no point.

She could barely move, she wanted to lie down and sleep. For the first time the horror of not making it raced through



her mind. Only the thought of her boys inspired her to keep going. If something happened to her who would look after them?

She reached a line of pine trees just a quarter mile from home. She huddled down at the base of the trees out of the snow and wind. Once she stopped Dorothy began to shake violently. A fire, she thought, I have to warm up.

She pulled out a book of matches but could not grip it. Dorothy thought of her boys again. She struggled up, and walked along the trees where the snow was only ankle deep.

When she reached the end of the trees she could not bring her legs to walk in the snow again. She took another couple of steps in the darkness and sank to the ground again.

She really wanted to go to sleep, but she knew she should not. Again she tried to light a match, but could not even tear one out of the book.

Then she let out a desperate cry in the darkness. "Mom, Mom!"

Her mom expected Dorothy to take the bus, not hitch a ride that day. When Dorothy did not arrive on the bus her sister Wilma came back and assumed she had not come.

A few minutes before Dorothy shouted out, her mom went to the barn to do chores. As she walked, she thought she heard something. She listened and heard it again. It was probably just the wind, she thought. But something made her stop, turn around and go back inside the house.

"Wilma, go get a horse and see if Dorothy came down the road allowance."

Dorothy never knew what guided her to shout for her mom or for her mom to go outside at just that moment. Fifteen minutes after she shouted, as she huddled under the trees, she heard her name and she had just enough energy to call back. "I'm over here, Wilma."

Out of the blackness came the figure of Wilma on a horse, leading another horse behind her. Wilma had to push and shove Dorothy on the horse, but once she was on, the wondrous warmth of the horse's body spread up into hers.

Dorothy spent the night recovering from hypothermia. Then the next day she borrowed a hat, gloves and shoes with grips, walked to the highway and hitched a ride back home to her boys. ■

(Marlene Parish of Sherwood Park, Alta. is Crandle's daughter-in-law. The tale took place 40 years ago.)



Memory by Cy Young

Make the kids earn their own spending money and you start them on their way to building character, right? Or do you?

When I was kid during the Depression, I got an allowance of 10 cents a week, for which I was expected to do my chores and generally behave myself. Later, I had a paper route and later still, I did odd jobs in the neighborhood, like cutting lawns or shovelling snow after school and on Saturdays. After a heavy snowfall, a chum and I would arm ourselves with shovels and knock on the doors of the neighbors to ask for work clearing snow. Shovelling off each walk took about a half-hour and people paid us whatever they felt like paying us — usually a dime or 15 cents and, in rare cases, a quarter.

It was tough, sweaty work and by nightfall our arms, legs, backs and shoulders were sore and aching. The day's take might average \$1.50 or \$1.75, a respectable amount then, when a nickel bought a loaf of bread and a dime paid for a quart of milk or a pound of hamburger.

If hard work and adversity build character, certainly a winter of snow shovelling should have had some salutary influence upon us young snow shovellers. I would like to say that after

Shovel your walk, mister?

a hard day's labor moving snow, at least the first hints of character development were beginning to shine forth from us like beacons.

How I should like to say that, at least in my own case, the philosophy was working. That at the end of the day I rushed home with my store of nickels, dimes and quarters and spread the coins selflessly on the table before the grateful eyes of my mother and adoring brothers and sister!

How different the reality! As the short prairie winter's day darkened and the cold bite of the settling early evening brought a deepening chill to our already numbed feet and fingers, the decision to pack up the day's work was forced upon us. We hoisted our shovels and headed — not for home — but the nearest soda fountain in the centre of the suburb. There we enjoyed the twin ecstasies of the heavy warmth of the place and huge, fine tasting ice cream sodas, ordered only after long moments deciding whether they should be cherry, orange, chocolate,

lemon or lime.

I should end the account there, with the appearance of at least a modicum of boyhood honor and common sense remaining. But I cannot end it there, for gooey nut and caramel chocolate bars, or at least a large bag of salted peanuts, followed the sodas.

And I have to admit to yet another temptation, the main reason for us scurrying, pockets jingling with change, to the soda fountain. Arranged enticingly at the front of the shop was a small boy's delight, a tempting line-up of lighted pinball and slot machines holding the euphoric promise of returning a jackpot or at least a ten-fold return on investment of our hard-earned nickels.

Once we started playing the machines, we were lost. The sight and sound of the colorful moving and clicking balls and the excitement of the spinning rollers mesmerized us. We took more and more chances with our small stores of nickels and dimes, now fast draining from our pockets.

At last the pockets were empty, and we felt the full weight of the chagrin and shame of the long, cold day of work, wasted in a few minutes of foolish, greedy excitement. Our hearts felt as hollow and empty as our pockets. Between us, the two of us could not scrape up even 10 cents to buy a 10-pack of Turret cigarettes! ■■

Christmas trees I have known

Memory by Jennifer Isaac



ver the years, my family has had various incarnations of Christmas trees.

When my children were small, we stuffed them like little sausages into their snowsuits and headed off to the forest reserve to cut a spindly-branched, orange-tinged pine, for the cost of a cutting permit — \$2.50. (Our guilt pangs were assuaged by government forestry technicians, who assured us we were doing something beneficial by thinning out the crop, making way for the healthier, more robust trees.)

After trudging through knee-high drifts of snow, we would eventually find one that satisfied all our family members. Tree bungeed to the roof of the car, we would sit inside warming our chilled digits, hastily gobbling limp tuna sandwiches, chased with watery hot chocolate from a thermos.

With the tree finally at home and set up in its wobbly stand, you'd have to blur your sight to make it look good. Every year I'd convince myself it was okay.

But growing up in the undisputed balsam fir Christmas tree capital of the world — Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia — it was a tough pill for me to swallow. As a young child, I remember the trucks rumbling past our house every November, trees bundled and heaped on the back, on their way to tree lots in the eastern United States.

So through my years out West, I've consoled myself with our family tradition of cutting our own tree, ignoring the local tree lots with their expensive spruce and Scotch pine.

One year I decided we'd do the right thing and not cut a tree at all, so off we trundled to the store to purchase a five-foot Norfolk Pine for \$49.99. Delicate (sparse) branches extended like frail, anorexic limbs, too anemic to hold the lightest of ornaments.

It looked pretty with twinkling lights, though. I entertained visions of having it, like a welcome member of the family, for the next 15 years, decorating it on special occasions.

It simply wasn't meant to be. A month later, it started dying off, the ends of its branches turning an alarming brown. I took it back and the store (bless them) refunded my money.

The suggestion of an Art Deco tree did not go over well with my children, staunch traditionalists that they are. I went ahead with it anyway, dragging a bare, oversized branch into the house and standing it in a corner next to the piano. It looked pretty funky, draped with silver beads and blue twinkling lights. I thought it made a statement (not sure what, though).

But this wasn't enough of a Christmas tree for them. So while on a working holiday in Nova Scotia last December, I decided to bring a tree to Alberta from back home.

Call it therapeutic amnesia, but I really had forgotten how beautiful and lush the balsam fir are. The Lions Club in Hubbards had set up a

pen outside the local grocery store where, for \$6, I got a gorgeous, five-foot charmer. The manager and meat cutter helped me bind it with butcher's twine and wrap it in garbage bags.

We had to saw off the trunk to get it in my rental. At the flight check-in counter, they were suspicious — "What have you got there?"

I decided humor was my best tack. "It's my grandmother," I laughed, before I told them the truth. However, I had exceeded my baggage limit. "Baby equipment flies free," the clerk told me, with a knowing sidelong glance. I thought a moment. "Let's call this an umbrella stroller?"

Back in Calgary, I patiently waited an hour for my grandmother/stroller/tree to tumble down the luggage chute, only to realize it had been classified as fragile and was resting quietly in a little side hallway next to an airsick golden retriever, ever hopeful it would be claimed (both the tree and the dog).

That explains how this Lunenburg County tree ended up in my southern Alberta living room. The scent of the balsam fir has permeated through my house — that's all the aromatherapy I need to remind me of childhood Christmas. ■





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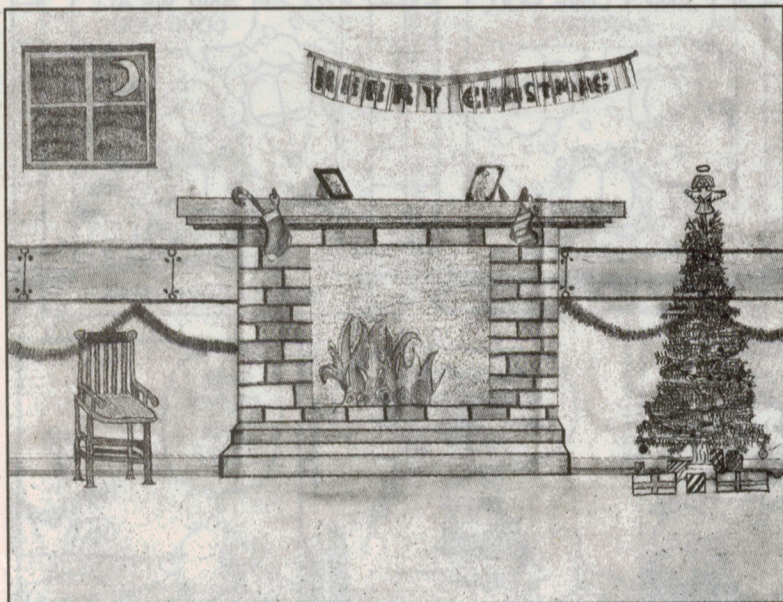
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▼ Jaldine Anderson, 7
Rimbey, Alta.



Jaldine Anderson
Age 7



▲ Brent Michalenko, 17
Lloydminster, Sask.

Goodbye

**But keep sending your poems,
stories, pictures and other
stuff because KIDSPiN
will continue online**

In the six and a half years since KiDSPiN made its first appearance on the pages of *Western People*, we've received thousands of submissions from kids across the country. You sent us heartfelt and sometimes heart-wrenching poetry, art, questions and requests. It is you, our readers, who made KiDSPiN a very special place to turn to each week.

The section was seeded from impressive stock: the long-running Young Co-operators page started decades ago and during its time was a popular feature for a dedicated core of members. When I first proposed a new, enhanced youth section back in 1993, it was met with some skepticism. But additions such as a science column, jokes, puzzles and penpals soon won over even the die-hards and we were pleased to see new names in our mailbox each week.

When the decision was announced on Nov. 1 to cancel *Western People*, our editors acknowledged how important it is to keep young readers interested in our paper. And so I am happy to say that KiDSPiN will soon be moved over to a new, jazzier online version on our website, www.producer.com. I hope to be able to use even more of your work, so please keep sending it in. For those who aren't wired and won't be able to see us, make sure you cruise in when you can. (One more reason for Mom and Dad to buy a computer for Christmas!)

To all who have contributed to the magazine over the years, I thank you. I hope you'll stay with us as we venture into new territory. You made KiDSPiN great in the paper and you can make it an even better section online.

You can drop us a line anytime (our addresses are at the top of the page) and let us know what you think. That's one tradition that will never change.

Michelle Houlden,
KiDSPiN co-ordinator

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GARFIELD

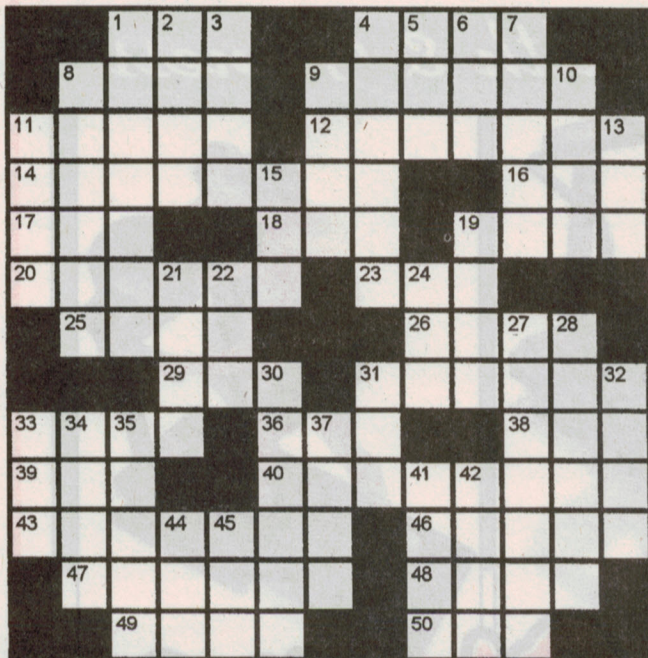


BETTY



Canadian Criss Cross

by Walter D. Feener



ACROSS

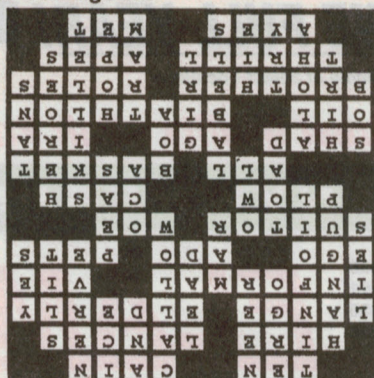
1. Playing card
4. Abel's brother
8. Employ
9. Knights' weapons
11. "King Kong" actress
12. Quite old
14. Casual
16. Strive for superiority
17. Self-centeredness
18. Bustle
19. Tame animals
20. Beau
23. Overwhelming sorrow
25. Farm implement
26. Ready money
29. Totality
31. Goal in hoops
33. Herringlike fish
36. In the past
38. Mr. Levin
39. Unctuous liquid
40. Winter sports event
43. Sibling
46. Actors' parts
47. Wave of pleasure
48. Tarzan's friends
49. Favorable votes
50. Complied with

DOWN

1. Candy wrapper
2. Hence
3. -do-well
4. Unfledged
5. As well as
6. Freezer contents
7. Courage
8. End a phone conversation
9. Plumbum
10. Long cut
11. Breaks a promise
13. Unquestionably
15. Calendar abbreviation
19. Pulse
21. Tailless jumper
22. Nocturnal bird
24. Wood sorrel
27. Frying pan
28. Courageous

men

30. Puts stickers on
31. Crusher snake
32. Changes into leather
33. Weep aloud
34. Noted trumpeter
35. Wahine's greeting
37. Young woman
41. Silk thread
42. Look forward to
44. Do one's best
45. Go quickly



MAILBOX

Listings are free but only run once. Please be brief. Issues are prepared three weeks in advance of publication date. Send info to: Mailbox, Western People, Box 2500, Saskatoon S7K 2C4.

Would like to know where to purchase the rubber suction cups for the Wear Ever salad maker. - Louise Storms, Box 8, Pickardville, Alta. T0G 1W0.

Wanted to know where to purchase porcelain miniature tea sets. Write: Olga Golinski, Box 1526, Vegreville, Alta. T9C 1S7, 780-632-4009.

Life in the New Finland Woods, Vol. 2, history book is being compiled. Present and past residents of the New Finland community, via Whitewood, Sask. are asked to submit updated history of their families. Also, wanted are homestead pictures and family photos that were not in the first book. Deadline December 2000. Send to: New Finland History Committee, Box 127, Whitewood, Sask. S0G 5C0.

Abee community cookbook, over 500 recipes. \$10 plus \$4 shipping. Write to: Marie Haig, Box 13, Abee, Alta. T0A 0A0, 780-398-2112.

Ten Dollars and a Dream - History of Beaton Ck, Brissen, Graven Lk, Dixonville, Golden Ridge, Grayling Ck, Hazel and Silver Hills. \$25 includes GST and postage. Contact: Mrs. J. Hitz, Box 154, Dixonville, Alta. T0H 1E0 or Jena Mart, Box 36, Dixonville, Alta. T0H 1E0.

Marwayne local history books Pioneering the Parklands, \$20 and Echoes of Marwayne and Area Volume II, \$30. Please enclose \$5 per book if mailed. Order from: Joan Meiklejohn, Secretary, Marwayne Historical Society, Box 176, Marwayne, Alta. T0B 2X0.

History of Birch River & District reprint, published in 1981 by Raymond Mullaney. \$25 plus \$7 postage. Mail cheques payable to Birch River and District Homecoming 2001, Box 13, Birch River, Man. R0L 0E0. Payment must be received by April 30, 2001. For information call Georgina Mosiondz, 204-236-4676, e-mail: duguy@mb.sympatico.ca.

Heritage Stew - About 30 recipes, stories and photographs covering the history and cultures of Boissevain, Manitoba and surrounding area. Published by Boissevain and Morton Regional Library, \$14.50 plus shipping. Contact: Library, Box 340, Boissevain, Man. R0K 0E0, e-mail: mbom@mts.net.

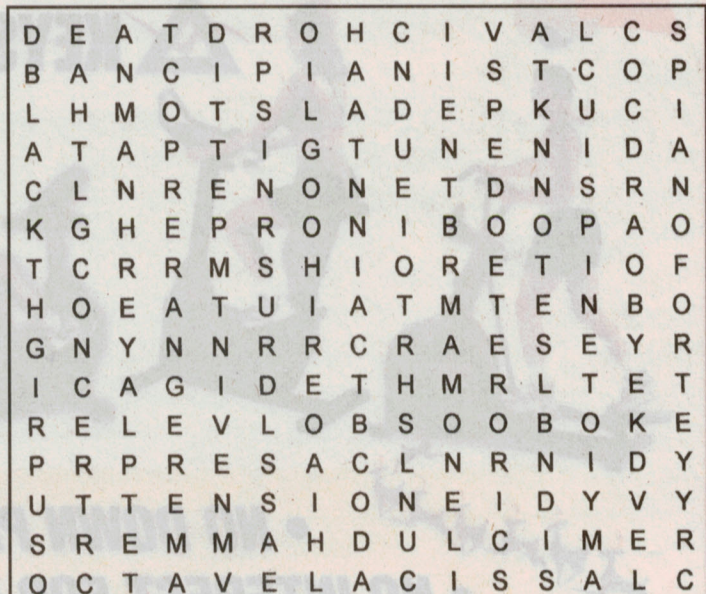
Ukrainian Catholic 500 Treasured Recipes cookbook, \$10 plus \$2 postage. Send to: Mary Puto, Box 134, Mayfair, Sask. S0M 1S0, 306-549-4911.

Bridging The Centuries - Mry Creek area history book. Two-volume set, \$90 plus \$8 postage. Order: Box 55, Abbey, Sask. S0N 0A0, 306-689-2227.

THE PIANO

Word Find puzzle
by Janice M. Peterson

When all the words in the list have been found, the letters left over will spell the solution.



Action
Black
Case
Classical
Clavichord
Concert
Damper
Dulcimer
Electronic
Grand
Hammers
Harmony

Harpsichord
Instrument
Keyboard
Melody
Notes
Octave
Pedals
Pianist
Pianoforte
Player
Range
Soundboard

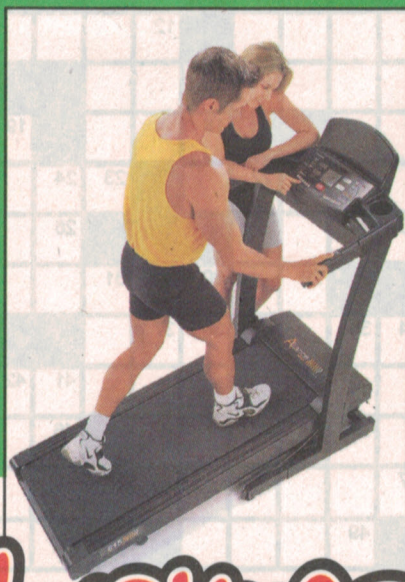
Spinet
Strings
Tension
Tone
Treble
Tune
Upright
Vibration

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(14 letters):

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Tickle

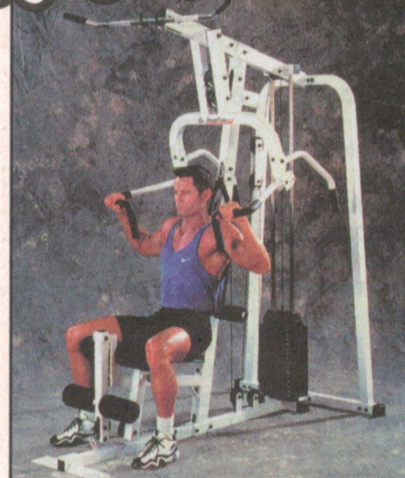
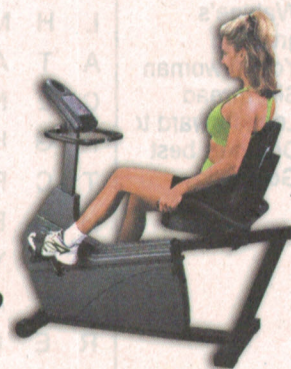
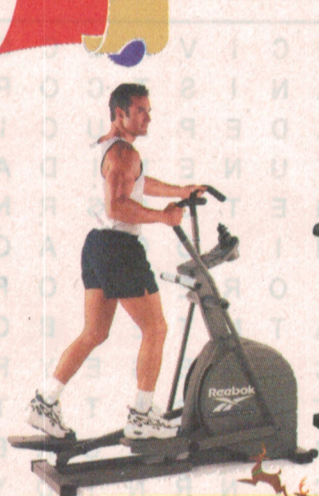
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